

# Proximate possessors

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In this paper, we describe possessive constructions in Tundra Nenets with a particular focus on the properties of the possessor. While pronominal possessors always trigger possessive agreement on the possessed noun, lexical possessors only do so in specific circumstances. We refer to such agreeing lexical possessors as prominent internal possessors (PIPs). In contrast to other lexical possessors, PIPs can control subjects of converbial clauses. We further show that the distribution of PIPs is restricted by other third person elements in the clause, and propose an explanation for this in terms of *obviation*.

**Keywords:** *Tundra Nenets, obviation, switch-reference, control, prominent internal possessors, converbs*

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, we motivate the notion of *prominent internal possessors* (PIPs) for Tundra Nenets (TN), a language of the Samoyedic branch of the Uralic family spoken in north-west Siberia and the Arctic part of European Russia.<sup>1</sup> The language exhibits typological traits typical of other Uralic languages, two of which are highly relevant for present purposes. First, the head- and dependent-marking nature of possessive morphology, and second, the expression of embedding using various non-finite constructions rather than finite embedding introduced by complementisers.

PIPs in TN are always lexical nouns. Unlike regular lexical possessors, they must trigger agreement on the possessed noun and are in a higher syntactic position in the possessive phrase. Correlating with this NP-internal structural prominence, PIPs behave like clause-level NPs in certain respects, even though they remain inside the NP and are not selected for by the verb. At the core of our proposal is the role of PIPs in coreference in complex sentences. More concretely, certain classes of converbs, which generally require their null subject to be coreferential with the matrix subject, allow the prominent possessor of the matrix subject to act as the controller of the embedded subject, rather than the matrix subject itself. We argue that the behavioural and structural properties of PIPs in TN reflect their role in an obviation system in the language. PIPs are Proximate and therefore have a prominent functional status in the minimal clause (the *obviation span*).

Most of the TN examples in this chapter come from the first author's field notes; for these examples the source is not cited. Where relevant, we also refer to discussion and data in Nikolaeva (2014a), and additional data are from Tereshchenko (1965) and Labanauskas

(1995). The transcription we use follows Nikolaeva's, which is in turn based mostly on Salminen (2012) with a few changes. Mainly, Salminen's *ng* is replaced by *ŋ* for the velar

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1 For more information on the language see Nikolaeva (2014a: Ch. 1).

nasal, and his  $\emptyset$  is replaced by  $\emptyset$  for a short neutral vowel. The transcription further uses an acute accent for palatalization, e.g.  $\acute{n}$ ,  $\acute{t}$ ,  $\acute{s}$ , etc., in line with much work in Uralic linguistics.  $y$  is a glide (IPA [j]); length is indicated by a macron, e.g.  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{i}$ . See Nikolaeva (2014: 14f) for further details. As in Salminen (2012), ‘ $\circ$ ’ indicates a super-short neutral vowel.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces possessive constructions in TN and motivates the notion of ‘Prominent Internal Possessor’ for this language. Since PIPs play an important role in switch-reference, Section 3 provides background information on the structure of the relevant complex sentences. In Section 4 we show that, in contrast to other possessors, PIPs exhibit subject-like properties with respect to the same-subject relation. Section 5 is central for the paper as it presents crucial arguments for the phenomenon of obviation in TN, and proposes an analysis of PIPs as Proximate possessors. Section 6 discusses the phrase-internal position of PIPs, while Section 7 presents a concluding discussion and implications.

## 2 Possessive constructions in Tundra Nenets

Possessive constructions in TN can express prototypical possessive relations, usually understood as ownership and part-whole relations. However, as in other (Uralic) languages, they also express a range of ‘non-possessive’ meanings. Essentially any kind of pragmatically or contextually defined association between two nominals may be rendered by means of a possessive construction (see Ackerman and Nikolaeva 2013 for extensive discussion of this point). In Section 2.1 we discuss the basic structure of adnominal possessive constructions in TN, while in Section 2.2 we discuss functional properties of agreeing possessors.

### 2.1 Basic structure

Given the absence of definite determiners other than demonstratives in TN, we will assume for the time being that nominal phrases are NPs and we will refer to them as such (but see Section 6 for further discussion). All NPs, including possessive constructions, are consistently head-final.

The possessor can be null, pronominal, or lexical. (1) illustrates pronominal possessors. As indicated, free-standing possessors are optional, but possessive agreement is obligatory. Agreement markers index the possessor’s person (1, 2, 3) and number (SG, DU, PL).

- (1) a. (pida) puxača-da  
       3SG wife-3SG  
       ‘his wife’
- b. (məñih) weñaku-ñih  
       we.DU dog.PL-1DU  
       ‘our dogs’

(Nikolaeva 2014a: 143)

Following the reasoning of Bresnan and Mchombo (1987); Ackerman and Nikolaeva (2013); Bresnan, Asudeh, Toivonen and Wechsler (2016), among others (see also Chapter 1 in this volume), at least the variants without free-standing pronouns in (1) can be interpreted to indicate that bound possessive markers have pronominal status and the examples thus represent instances of pronominal incorporation. In other words, the possessive markers on the head noun in (2) are ‘true’ possessors: they satisfy the selectional requirements of the possessed noun. While they can appear with an overt free-standing pronominal, the presence of such a free-standing pronominal possessor is motivated by a special discourse status, typically contrastive focus.

In contrast to pronominal possessors, lexical possessors are in the genitive, and do not trigger obligatory possessive agreement. Lexical possessors are shown in the following examples, with both (2a) and (2b) expressing identical possessive relations.

(2)

a. Wera-h            ñe°ka  
     Wera-GEN     brother  
     ‘Wera’s brother’

b. Wera-h            ñe°ka-da  
     Wera-GEN     brother-3SG  
     ‘Wera’s brother’

(Nikolaeva 2014a: 147)

Constructions such as (2b) differ from other lexical and pronominal possessors in showing both head- and dependent-marking, i.e. case morphology on the possessor and a possessive marker on the possessed noun. We will discuss the status of this marker in Section 6; for now, we refer to the lexical possessor in (2a) as a ‘non-agreeing possessor’, and the one in (2b) as an ‘agreeing (lexical) possessor’. As we argue in Section 4, agreeing lexical possessors have the syntactic properties of PIPs as defined in Chapter 1.

Before we do this, however, it is worth considering whether agreeing possessors like the one in (2b) are internal to the NP of the possessed noun or located outside of it, triggering a kind of resumptive agreement morphology on the possessive noun (as is the case with some dative possessors in Hungarian, for example, cf. Szabolcsi 1994; É. Kiss 2000, 2014). If agreeing lexical possessors are external, their behaviour should resemble that of external possessors found in a number of languages (see the papers in Payne and Barshi 1999b for an overview).

Tundra Nenets does indeed have an external possessive construction but it is highly restricted in its distribution. External possessors can only be associated with subjects (of intransitive verbs), and no other grammatical function.<sup>2</sup> This is illustrated in (3). In these examples, the possessors are separated from the possessed noun by the sentence adverbs *t’ehana* ‘yesterday’ or *yet’ri* ‘always’, but only (3a), where the possessor is associated with the

<sup>2</sup> This does not imply that all instances of agreeing possessors on (intransitive) subjects are external.

subject, is grammatical. Note that otherwise the position of sentence adverbs is quite free within the clause, as shown in (3b).

(3)

- a. Wera-h            t'ė́nana        ńabako-da        xal'a-də-mi                    ta-ś°  
 Wera-GEN    yesterday    sister-3SG        fish-PRED-ACC.1SG        give-3SG.PST  
 'As for Wera, his sister gave me some fish yesterday.'                    (Nikolaeva 2014a: 222)
- b. (t'ė́nana)    Wera-h        (\*t'ė́nana)    ńabako-m-ta        (t'ė́nana)    ladorŋa-dəm-ć°  
 yesterday    Wera-GEN    yesterday    sister-ACC-3SG    yesterday    beat-1SG-PST  
 'As for Wera, I beat up his sister yesterday.'                    (Nikolaeva 2014a: 222)
- c. Wera-h            (\*yetfi)        weńako-x°də-nta        pĩn°ə-d°m  
 Wera-GEN    always        dog-ABL-3SG        be.afraid-1SG  
 'I am (always) afraid of Wera's dog.'                    (Nikolaeva 2014a: 144)
- d. Wera-h            (\*yetfi)        te-x°nəq-ta                    to°-dəm-ć°  
 Wera-GEN    always        reindeer-LOC.PL-3SG        come-1SG-PST  
 'I (always) arrived on Wera's reindeer.'                    (Nikolaeva 2014a: 144)

The phrase-internal status of agreeing lexical possessors is supported by further evidence. The relevant NPs can be focused as a whole, suggesting that the possessor forms a constituent with the possessed noun. This is shown in (4). First, (4a) shows that the possessor and the possessed noun form a constituent, because they appear together under a *bona fide* contrastive focus. Second, in (4b), the so-called 'limitative' affix *-ri-*, a strong exclusive focus marker, appears on both the possessor and the possessed noun when it takes scope over the possessive phrase. As Nikolaeva (2014a: 124) argues, this kind of limitative 'concord' in TN is indicative of syntactic constituency: the limitative may be located on the phrasal head alone or both on the head and its dependents, including possessors, without a difference in interpretation.

(4)

- a. Pet'a-h            ńa-m-ta                    yad°btaə-d°m,        Maša-m  
 Petya-GEN    friend-ACC-3SG        meet-1SG            Masha-ACC  
 ńĩ-w°  
 NEG-1SG>SG.OBJ  
 'I met Petya's friend, not Masha.'
- b. Maša-ri-h            ńabako-ri-n°h /        ńabako-ri-xən-nta  
 Masha-LIM-GEN    sister-LIM-DAT        sister-LIM-DAT-3SG  
 piśmo-m            ŋǣdaraə-d°m

letter-ACC    send-1SG>SG.OBJ  
 ‘I sent only Masha’s sister a letter.’

NPs with agreeing lexical possessors can be coordinated with other NPs, as shown in (5). In this example, agreement on the verb reflects the features of the coordinated phrase, with second person agreement resulting from the resolution strategies discussed by Nikolaeva (2014a: 415ff).

- (5) [ Pet’a-h        ná-da        təd’ekəxət°    pidər°    ] to°-d’ih  
       Petya-GEN    friend-3SG    then        2SG        come-2DU  
       ‘Petya’s friend and you came (together).’

In addition, agreeing lexical possessors do not behave like clausal arguments in most respects. For instance, they do not participate in valence-changing operations such as passivization separately from the possessed noun and they are unable to control predicate agreement. Agreeing lexical possessors of the subject do not bind reflexives, while subjects themselves do. We conclude from these facts that agreeing lexical possessors are non-argumental and NP-internal; they therefore fit our definition of PIPs and we will refer to them as such in what follows.

While both types of lexical possessors, regular non-agreeing possessors and PIPs, are internal to the phrase that contains the possessed noun, they crucially differ in other morphosyntactic properties, namely their role in controlling same-subject relations, whether they can appear with other third person elements in the clause, and their position in the possessive phrase. We address these points in detail in Sections 4, 5, and 6. In the next subsection, we provide a preliminary discussion of the functional properties associated with PIPs.

## 2.2 Information structural properties of PIPs

PIPs, i.e. agreeing lexical possessors, are ‘optional’ in the sense that speakers have a choice between the constructions in (2a) and (2b) and both express the same possessive relation semantically. This raises the question of what motivates the choice of one form or the other. The data and discussion in this section are based on Nikolaeva (2005) and Nikolaeva (2014a: 144ff), although we reach a partly different conclusion.

PIPs are favoured when the possessor is established in previous discourse and/or is salient in the situation of speech. (6) demonstrates that when the referent of the possessor is established in the context and is under discussion at the time of utterance, using a PIP for it is natural.

(6)

a. **Context:** *Why did Wera hit you?*

mən°    Wera-h        mašina-m\*?(-ta) taxabta°-dəm-ć°

I            Wera-GEN    car-ACC-3SG    break-1SG-PST  
 ‘I broke Wera’s car.’

b. **Context:** *Whom do you know from Masha’s family?*

Maša-h            ě°ka-m\*?(-ta)            t’ěnewaə-d°m  
 Masha-GEN    brother-ACC-3SG            know-1SG  
 ‘I know Masha’s brother.’

Using non-agreeing lexical possessors in these examples would be infelicitous, although not necessarily totally excluded. Non-agreeing possessors rather tend to be used in situations when the possessor’s referent is not presupposed, including in all-new sentences.

(7)

a. **Context:** *Where is your cup?*

Pet’a-h            weńako(\*?-da)    taxabta°-da-ś°  
 Petya-GEN    dog(-3SG)            break-3SG>SG.OBJ-PST  
 ‘Petya’s dog broke it.’

b. **Context:** *What happened?*

mań°    Wera-h            mašina-m(\*?-ta)    taxabta°-dəm-ć°  
 I            Wera-GEN    car-ACC-3SG    break-1SG-PST  
 ‘I broke Wera’s car.’

If such question-answer contexts are taken to establish topicality, as is commonly assumed in research on information structure, the PIP in (6a) is topical. Depending on the analysis, it is either the primary (and the only) topic, or it may be a secondary topic in the presence of a primary subject topic (see Nikolaeva 2001; Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011 on the notion of secondary topic). Example (6b) is more problematic because the PIP is part of the focus domain targeted by a *wh*-question, i.e. the NP *Masha’s brother*, but it is still associated with the pragmatic presupposition in the sense of Lambrecht (1994). In (7) the possessors are not topical: in (7a) the topic corresponds to the referent ‘cup’ expressed as a pronominal object marker on the verb, while (7b) is a sentence-focus structure.

The distribution of PIPs arguably provides further evidence for the (secondary) topic analysis, assuming that the secondary topic role is unique per clause and that topicality generally tends to be associated with ‘higher’ grammatical functions (Comrie 2003; Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011). As a first approximation, PIPs show the following distributional restrictions (see the discussion and data in Nikolaeva 2014a: 144ff for further details).

- no two PIPs can occur within one clause, independently of coreference

- PIPs are rare on oblique NPs in constructions which express alienable possessive relations
- PIPs rarely occur in embedded clauses; if they do, they seem to be restricted to appear on the subject

The first of these restrictions is grammatically strict and is illustrated in (8).

- (8) \*Wera-h    nábako-da    Waśa-h            weńako-m-ta    ladə°  
 Wera-GEN sister-3SG    Wasya-GEN    dog-ACC-3SG    hit.3SG  
 intended: ‘Wera’s sister hit Wasya’s dog.’ (Nikolaeva 2014a: 146)

Other observed distributional restrictions are tendencies which can be violated under appropriate discourse conditions.

The topical status of PIPs is further supported by the fact that they cannot normally appear in a context in which a possessor is understood to be non-specific. This is shown in (9a) which was elicited in a context that only allowed for a non-specific interpretation of the possessor, using the Russian pronoun *čej-nibudʹ* ‘someone’s (non-specific)’ as a translational equivalent. In contrast, in (9b) the indefinite pronoun *xībʹaxəw°* ‘someone’ is interpreted as specific and was translated with the Russian pronoun *čej-to* ‘someone’s (specific)’; in this example, the PIP is grammatical.

- (9)
- a. *xībʹaxəw°*    *xər°-m* /    \**xər°-m-ta*            *xo-wa-n°h*            *xərwaə-d°m*  
 someone    knife-ACC    knife-ACC-3SG    find-IPFV.AN-DAT    want-1SG  
 ‘I want to find someone’s knife.’
- b. *xībʹaxəw°*    *xər°-m* /    *xər°-m-ta*            *xoə-d°m*  
 someone    knife-ACC    knife-ACC-3SG    find-1SG  
 ‘I found someone’s knife.’

In addition, PIPs cannot be *wh*-words which are associated with (narrow) focus and are therefore inherently non-topical.<sup>3</sup>

There is, however, no one-to-one correspondence between the use of PIPs and the topical status of the possessor referent. Some degree of ‘optionality’ and difference in judgements can often be observed even within the same context, as we saw above. What is more, there are contexts in which PIPs cannot have an obvious topical interpretation. In (10), for example, the agreeing possessor *xasawa-h* ‘man-GEN’ is not referential, hence cannot be a topic if topics are assumed to be associated with referentiality or specificity as is often claimed (see e.g. Strawson 1964; Reinhart 1981; see also Gundel & Fretheim 2006; Erteschik-Shir 2007: 13ff).

3 This contrasts with the behaviour of external possessors.



- (10) pid'ih      nū-d'ih      mäl'e°    xasawa-h    yolć°n-kənta      tǎwi°-q  
 they.DU    child-3DU    already    man-GEN    age-DAT.3SG      reach-REFL.3SG  
 'Their child has already reached the age of man.'      (Tereshchenko 1965: 496)

While the PIP in (10) cannot be interpreted as specific, an arguably important factor in this case is that the possessive construction is inalienable. Nikolaeva (2014a: 148) suggests that speakers can choose to emphasize the salience of the possessor within its own local domain, the NP, rather than its salience relative to other elements in the clause. In other words, the PIP construction is used to highlight the close relationship between the possessor and the possessed noun in the overall construal of the phrase; hence inalienable possessive relations are especially frequent in such constructions. Unlike alienable PIPs, inalienable PIPs can appear more freely on more oblique grammatical functions, including various adjuncts, complements to postpositions, and passive agents. PIPs are, however, not obligatory in alienable possessive constructions and are not markers of inalienability *per se*: there is no formal opposition of alienable vs. inalienable possession in TN, and PIPs are not employed to express a particular type of possessive relation. As we show below, it may be other factors which determine their distribution.

Summarising so far, the data here have demonstrated that PIPs in Tundra Nenets have the following properties. First, they are NP-internal, since e.g. a sentence adverb cannot intervene between them and the possessed noun and because they lack the syntactic behaviour typical of arguments but behave as one constituent with the possessed noun for the purpose of all standard constituency tests. Second, PIPs can only be lexical possessors and, unlike other lexical possessors, they must trigger agreement on the possessed noun. Third, the only strict grammatical constraints we have been able to observe so far are that two PIPs are impossible within the same clause and that PIPs cannot correspond to a *wh*-word. Fourth, PIPs are 'optional'. Some occurrences of PIPs suggest that they may be topical or at least presuppositional, but there are non-topical examples too, so it is ultimately not possible to equate PIPs with (secondary) topicality or any other well-defined information structural role. However, crucially, PIPs appear to be more functionally prominent than non-agreeing lexical possessors. It is because of their functional and, as shown later, also structural prominence that we refer to them as 'prominent internal possessors'.

### 3 Non-finite clauses in Tundra Nenets

Non-finite verbs in TN occur predominantly in dependent clauses and include converbs, action nominals (nominalizations) and participles. All these forms are productively derived from verbs, but they differ in their morphosyntax, and in their properties with respect to switch-reference. In this paper, we focus on one type of non-finite clause, namely adverbial clauses headed by so-called 'modal' converbs. Before we describe the behaviour of PIPs in such clauses and how it contrasts with that of non-agreeing possessors, in this section we briefly discuss the basic properties of such converbial clauses.

### 3.1 Converbial constructions

Converbs in TN are non-finite verbal forms which typically mark adverbial subordination, (see Haspelmath 1995; Haspelmath and König 1995; van der Auwera 1998; Ylikoski 2003 for general discussion of converbs). There are four types of converbs in TN traditionally referred to as ‘evasive’, ‘conditional’, ‘purposive’, as well as ‘modal’, the latter of which is our focus in this paper. In addition to their adverbial function, modal converbs may also be used as complements of subject and object control verbs and, marginally as sentential subjects and in relative clauses (for a description of the other types see Nikolaeva 2014a: Sec. 16.2).

In adverbial clauses, modal converbs show neither case-marking nor subject agreement. Since they are uninflected, they are similar in this respect to converbs in other languages, for example Tuva (Bergelson and Kibrik 1995), Bashkir (Chapter 7, this volume), Turkish (Chapter 6, this volume), Evenki (I. Nedjalkov 1995) or Burushaski (Tikkanen 1995). Converbial clauses are not introduced by either complementisers or adpositions, and do not overtly express any temporal distinctions, although they can express independent negation. Together with their other verbal properties, this suggests that converbial clauses are verbal projections, of arguably different sizes, depending on whether they include an overt subject or not, e.g. IPs or VPs, but arguably not CPs (cf. Baker 2011).

The modal converb ends in  $-(\acute{s}/\acute{c})^\circ$  and denotes various types of semantic relations largely depending on the aspectual class of the base verb. TN verbs fall into two such aspectual classes, imperfective and perfective verbs. When derived from imperfective verbs, converbs head temporal or manner clauses, sometimes with additional adverbial meanings; see Nikolaeva (2014a: 377ff). They express an event that is either simultaneous with the event expressed by the main clause or whose temporal reference includes the temporal reference of the main event. Here and hereafter the boundaries of the converbial clause are indicated with square brackets.

(11)

- a. [ t'uku<sup>°</sup> kniga-m tolaba-ś<sup>°</sup> ] Maša yaruma  
 this book-ACC read-MOD.CVB Masha start.crying.3SG  
 ‘While reading this book, Masha started crying.’
- b. pidər<sup>°</sup> ŋaŋi puxača-nt<sup>°</sup> ŋah [ xoŋo-<sup>°</sup> ] xa-ŋku-d'ih  
 2SG and wife-GEN.2SG with sleep-MOD.CVB die-FUT-2DU  
 ‘You and your wife will die in your sleep.’

When derived from perfective verbs, converbs have sequential readings and convey temporal, concessive or causal meanings like ‘as soon as’, ‘after’, ‘although’, ‘if’, or ‘because’:

(12)

- a. [ ŋarka pæ-n<sup>°</sup>h t'ebə-<sup>°</sup> ] xən<sup>°</sup> wabtarey<sup>°</sup>-q  
 big stone-DAT bump.into-MOD.CVB sledge turn.over-REFL.3SG

‘The sledge turned over after/because it bumped into a big stone.’

(Nikolaeva 2014a: 378)

b. [ wərk<sup>o</sup>-m mənə-ć<sup>o</sup> ]      nid<sup>o</sup>-me-w<sup>o</sup>q  
 bear-ACC see-MOD.CVB quiver-INFR-REFL.1SG

‘I quivered from seeing a bear.’

(Tereshchenko 1965: 320)

In either case, there must be a close logical connection between the two situations: the dependent event is perceived as in some sense related to the main event and possibly causing it.

While their subjects are often null, converbial clauses can host overt subjects as well. Both the main and the converbial subject are assigned semantic roles within their clause and can be shown to be subjects by reflexivisation, among other tests. An example is shown in (13), where the embedded subject binds a reflexive in the converbial clause.

(13) [ Pet’a-h      xər<sup>o</sup>ta    pix<sup>o</sup>də-m-ta      ladə-<sup>o</sup> ]      Maša  
 Petya-GEN    REFL    REFL-ACC-3SG    hit-MOD.CVB    Masha  
 yaruma  
 start.crying.3SG

‘When/because Petya hit himself, Masha started crying.’

Unlike in Korean, for example, where converbial clauses can show properties of either coordination or subordination (Rudnitskaya 1998; Kwon and Polinsky 2008), but perhaps similarly to Turkish converbs in *-yIp* (Chapter 6, this volume), TN modal converbs appear to show typical properties of subordination. This is confirmed by a number of tests discussed by Rudnitskaya (1998), Kwon and Polinsky (2008), and Weisser (2015) for other languages, for example the order of the converbial clause relative to the matrix clause or the possibility of permuting the clauses retaining the meaning of the whole sentence. These authors suggest that a fixed order of converbial and matrix clause is evidence in favour of coordination, while variable order supports a subordination analysis. While converbial clauses in TN are mostly clause-initial, they are found in other positions as well, e.g. center-embedded like in (11b), thus pointing to a subordinating structure. In coordination, the meaning of the whole sentence does not change when the order of the coordinated clauses changes, while in subordination, it does. In TN, expressing the main clause’s content as a converbial clause and vice versa in examples like (12) changes the causal relation between the two clauses and thus the meaning of the whole sentence. We therefore conclude that converbial clauses in TN are instances of adverbial subordination.<sup>4</sup>

4 Another test discussed by Kwon and Polinsky (2008) and Weisser (2015) concerns backward pronominalization. In English coordinate constructions, a pronoun in the first conjunct cannot corefer with a proper name in the second conjunct, e.g. \**He<sub>i</sub> arrived and John<sub>i</sub> entered*, while this is possible in subordination (Culicover and Jackendoff 1997). When applied to null pronouns and full NPs, this test

### 3.2 Control relations

Like in some other languages with converbs mentioned in the previous section, particular types of converbs in TN show a preference for their null subject to corefer with the subject of the matrix clause (same-subject preference), while others allow for both same-subject and different-subject reference (such converbs are referred to as ‘varying-subject’ converbs by V. Nedjalkov 1995: 110). As mentioned in Section 3.1, we are discussing modal converbs that are used as sentential adjuncts. Since adjuncts are not selected, there is no requirement from the matrix verb with respect to subject or object control in the converbial clause, so coreference restrictions in such constructions arguably indicate properties of the converbial clause itself.

Modal converbial clauses can have overt subjects which cannot corefer with the matrix subject, as illustrated in (14), or with other arguments or clause-level adjuncts of the matrix clause, like the overt object in (15). (16) indicates that an overt subject cannot corefer with a null object in the matrix clause either.

- (14) [ Pet´a-h to-ś° ] xoney°-q  
 Petya-GEN come-MOD.CVB fall.asleep-REFL.3SG  
 ‘When Petya<sub>i</sub> came, s/he<sub>\*i/j</sub> fell asleep.’
- (15) [ Maša-h to-ś° ] Pet´a śita nú°ća°  
 Masha-GEN come-MOD.CVB Petya 3SG.ACC kiss.3SG  
 ‘When Masha<sub>i</sub> came, Petya kissed her<sub>\*i/j</sub>.’
- (16) [ Maša-h xoño-° ] Pet´a pad°ta°-da  
 Masha-GEN sleep-MOD.CVB Petya paint-3SG>SG.OBJ  
 ‘When Masha<sub>i</sub> was asleep, Petya painted him/her<sub>\*i/j</sub>.’

However, possessors in the main clause are not subject to this coreference restriction (as they are neither arguments nor clause-level adjuncts). In (17), the embedded subject is overt, and cannot corefer with the (null) pronominal object in the main clause (just like in (16)), but it can corefer with the subject’s pronominal possessor. This suggests that the different nature of the possessive pronominal in (17), namely that it is not a clause-level argument or adjunct in the matrix clause, affects its ability to corefer with the embedded subject.

- (17) [ Maša-h to-ś° ] wāsako-da nú°ća°-da  
 Masha-GEN come-MOD.CVB husband-3SG kiss-3SG>SG.OBJ  
 ‘When Masha<sub>i</sub> came, her<sub>i/j</sub> husband kissed her<sub>\*i</sub>.’

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suggests that converbial clauses are subordinated in TN as well, but coreference relations are subject to other constraints we discuss in Section 3.2 and might make this test (in its standard form) inapplicable for TN.

Descriptively, then, coreference is ruled out between maximal projections in the converbial clause and the main clause, i.e. arguments and adjuncts in either clause, but this restriction does not hold for phrases embedded in maximal projections, like possessors.

The distinct coreference relations for arguments vs. possessors also hold for non-pronominal NPs. (18) shows that the embedded and the main clause subject cannot be identical, coreferential proper names. Coreference is possible between an overt subject in the embedded clause, and a possessor in the main clause, however, as shown in (19).

- (18) \*[ Pet'a-h to-ś° ] Pet'a xoney°-q  
 Petya-GEN come-MOD.CVB Petya fall.asleep-REFL.3SG  
 intended: 'When Petya<sub>i</sub> came, he<sub>i</sub> fell asleep.'

- (19) [ Pet'a-h tərcam mәне-ć° ] Pet'a-h ñĩśa(-da) xəya  
 Petya-GEN such see-MOD.CVB Petya-GEN father(-3SG) leave.3SG  
 'After Petya saw this, Petya's father left.'

In addition, modal converbial clauses can have null subjects which must corefer with the matrix subject but not with other elements of the matrix clause. Examples of this are shown in (20), see also (11) and (12) above. In (20a), the unexpressed subject must corefer with the subject of the matrix clause, in this case *Wera*; it cannot corefer with the matrix object or have free reference. In (20b), the matrix object precedes the converbial clause, but still, the only potential controller of the converb's subject is the implicit subject of the imperative.

- (20)  
 a. [ tol°-h t'ax°na ŋamt'o-° ] Wera Pet'a-m məneŋŋa  
 table-GEN at sit-MOD.CVB Wera Petya-ACC see.3SG  
 'Wera<sub>i</sub> saw Petya<sub>j</sub> while Ø<sub>i//\*</sub><sub>j</sub> sitting at the table.'
- b. Maša-m [ tol°-h t'ax°na ŋamt'o-° ] ñor°  
 Masha-ACC table-GEN at sit-MOD.CVB NEG.IMP.2SG>SG.OBJ  
 pæər°-q  
 do-CONNEG  
 'Don't touch Masha while sitting at the table.'

In (20), unlike in (14)–(19), the modal converb behaves like a same-subject converb, i.e. coreference relations between the arguments in the converbial clause and the main clause are possible, but not freely available. Coreference must hold between the two subjects, rather than a subject and an object, for example. There are therefore two main patterns of coreference between nominals in the converbial and the matrix clause. On the one hand, coreference

relations between clause-level arguments and adjuncts in either clause is ruled out, as in (14)–(19). On the other, coreference is possible between the two subjects, as in (20). These two patterns correlate with whether the subject of the converbial clause is overt or not.<sup>5</sup>

We take this variation in the interpretation of converbial subjects to mean that there are differences in how they can be represented. In particular, we assume that the subjects of same-subject uses of the modal converb are controlled, while the subjects of different-subject uses of the converb are not.

In LFG terms, this means that different-subject converbial clauses are closed adjuncts ('ADJ'), i.e. fully fledged sentential structures (see e.g. Bresnan 1982a: 347; Bresnan *et al.* 2016: 94ff). In Government and Binding/Minimalist terms, such converbial clauses are arguably non-finite IPs which can host an overt subject (see e.g. Baker 2011; Weisser 2015: 78). A structure compatible with these assumptions is shown in (21).

(21) [ [CVB SBJ<sub>i</sub> ... V-MOD.CVB ] SBJ<sub>j</sub> ... V ]

Since overt lexical subjects of converbial clauses appear in the genitive, the converbial clause includes a nominal projection which assigns this case, as Baker (2011) discusses for the Turkic language Sakha.

When coreference is possible between the matrix subject and the converbial implied subject, i.e. on same-subject uses of the modal converb, we treat the implied subject as being controlled by the main clause subject. In the LFG literature, such relations are usually expressed by the notion of functional control (Bresnan 1982a; Mohanan 1982; Bresnan *et al.* 2016: 289ff), and converbial clauses of this type can be represented as open adjuncts ('XADJ'). Open functions lack subjects which therefore cannot be spelled out overtly and which must be identified with an element in the matrix clause. In this case, the f-structure representing the matrix subject must be identical to the subject of the converbial clause, as specified by the functional equation IP: ( $\uparrow$  SUBJ) = ( $\uparrow$  XADJ SUBJ). The equation rules out structures in which the converb's null subject does not corefer with the matrix subject.

LFG's notion of functional control resembles obligatory control in Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program (Williams 1980; Chomsky 1981, 1995; Landau 2013). Obligatory control restricts the reference of a dependent null subject, PRO, in a complement or an adjunct to a controller in the matrix clause, usually the matrix subject or the object (see in particular Landau (2013: 28ff, Ch. 5); see also Section 6). The strict coreference of the embedded subject with the matrix subject in (20) motivates the assumption that such converbial clauses contain a bound PRO subject rather than a null pronominal *pro* which could have free reference as well. This is shown in (22).

5 The Estonian converb in *-des* is arguably similar in that it also allows overt subjects and null, implicit subjects: V.Nedjalkov (1995: 110) characterizes it as a varying-subject converb, and Plado (2015) shows that overt subjects in the converbial clause generally lead to different-subject uses. Estonian *-des* differs from modal converbs in TN, however, in that it allows coreference between a non-subject argument in the matrix clause and the converbial subject as well, as Plado (2015) argues.

(22) [ [<sub>CVB</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> ... V-MOD.CVB ] SBJ<sub>i</sub> ... V ]

Coreference is also possible between possessors in both clauses, subject to certain conditions. In (23), for example, the required interpretation is ensured by the presence of the PIP on the main clause subject. A non-agreeing possessor will lead to an odd or ungrammatical interpretation of the sentence, presumably one in which the subject (*stomach*) corefers with the embedded subject's possessor.

(23) [ ηāwa-nta ye-ś° ] Pet'a-h t'īw°-da yeś°ma  
 head-GEN.3SG hurt-CVB Petya-GEN stomach-3SG start.hurting.3SG  
 'His<sub>i</sub> head hurting, Petya<sub>i</sub>'s stomach started hurting (too).'

In (24), the PIP of the matrix subject allows an interpretation in which it is Masha's child who is crying; in the absence of possessive agreement, it must be someone else's child who is crying.

(24) [ ηāceke-nta yarum-ć° ] Maša-h ηāwa-da yeś°ma  
 child-GEN.3SG cry-CVB Masha-GEN head-3SG start.hurting.3SG  
 'When her<sub>i</sub> child was crying, Maša<sub>i</sub>'s head started hurting.'

For these cases, we assume that the possessor of the embedded subject can have free reference in principle. The reason that a PIP can corefer with the embedded subject's possessor, but a non-agreeing possessor cannot is arguably due to the PIP's position in the noun phrase (see Section 6 for further discussion). In (23) and (24), there is therefore no control relation.

To conclude this section, we have discussed general properties of modal converbs and restrictions on the reference of their subjects. We proposed that modal converbs are sentential adverbials that can be interpreted as either closed or open adjuncts, i.e. as exhibiting obligatory control and involving a PRO subject, or as non-controlled adjuncts with an overt subject. In the remainder of this chapter, we will focus on open adjuncts only, i.e. on structures involving the modal converb in which there must be coreference between the (implied) subject of the converbial clause and an NP in the matrix clause.

## 4 Prominent internal possessors and control

Tundra Nenets is an atypical switch-reference language in certain ways. First, it lacks dedicated switch-reference morphology, and instead uses other grammaticalized means to express same-subject and different-subject preferences, including the choice of non-finite verb form, as we saw in the previous section. Second, we show in this section that it allows PIPs as well as subjects to appear in same-subject contexts. In other words, both subjects and PIPs can act as switch-reference pivots in this language.

As argued in Section 3.2, modal converbs with null subjects show a same-subject pattern, implemented here using the notion of obligatory or functional control. When the converb's



subject is unexpressed and in a coreference relationship with an NP in the matrix clause, it obligatorily corefers with the matrix subject. Like other NPs in the matrix clause, a regular lexical possessor of the main clause subject (or another NP) cannot control the null subject of the converb in such structures. In (25), *Wera-h* is the non-agreeing lexical possessor of the subject *ńĩśa* ‘father’, but only the latter can control the embedded null subject.

- (25) [ *tol°-h*      *t’ax°na* *ɲamt’o-°* ]      *Wera-h*      *ńĩśa*      *Pet’a-m*  
          table-GEN at              sit-MOD.CVB      *Wera-h*      father      *Petya-ACC*  
          *məneqɲa*  
          see.3SG  
          ‘*Wera<sub>i</sub>*’s father<sub>*j*</sub> saw *Petya<sub>k</sub>* while  $\emptyset_{*i/j/*k}$  sitting at the table.’      (Nikolaeva 2014a: 378)

Crucially, agreeing lexical possessors, or PIPs, behave differently in this respect. This is illustrated in (26a) using an imperfective modal converb and in (26b) using a perfective modal converb. In these examples, possessive agreement on the possessed head noun cannot be omitted while retaining the same interpretation (as indicated by ‘\*’ in (26)).

- (26)  
     a. [ *tol°-h*      *t’ax°na* *ɲamt’o-°* ]      *ɲəćeki°-h* *kniga\*(-da)*      *mən°tey°-q*  
          table-GEN at              sit-MOD.CVB      child-GEN book-3SG      fall-REFL.3SG  
          ‘When the child<sub>*i*</sub> was sitting at the table, his<sub>*i*</sub> book fell.’      (Nikolaeva 2014a: 380)  
     b. [ *tərća-m*      *məne-ć°* ]      *Mośeko-nt°*              *śey°\*(-da)*      *xəya*  
          such-ACC see-MOD.CVB      Moseko-GEN.2SG      heart-3SG      left.3SG  
          ‘After seeing them, Moseko got frightened.’, lit. ‘... Moseko’s heart went.’  
          (based on Labanauskas 1995: 40)

As Landau (2013: 234ff) points out, PRO in non-obligatory control always has human reference, but in the absence of a PIP in (26a), the sentence would have the odd interpretation of the inanimate noun *book* controlling PRO. Thus, the referential properties of the PRO subject support the idea that the control relation is one of obligatory control, and not one of non-obligatory control. When a subject that would be a potential controller itself has a PIP, both can in principle act as controllers, as shown in (27), although same-subject seems appears to be a preferred interpretation.

- (27) [ *yarum-ć°* ]                      *Pet’a-h*              *ńĩśa-da*              *xəya*  
          start.crying-MOD.CVB      *Petya-GEN*      father-3SG      leave.3SG  
          ‘PRO<sub>*i/j*</sub> having started crying, *Petya<sub>i</sub>*’s father<sub>*j*</sub> left.’



These examples also show a morphosyntactic means of overriding the same-subject preference that open adjunct converbial clauses exhibit. A PIP of the main clause subject allows the possessor to act as the controller of the embedded null subject in an open adjunct clause. Since control relations between the converbial and the matrix clause generally involve subject coreference, this is an example of non-canonical same-subject marking (Stirling 1993; de Sousa 2016), because one of the two pivots is not actually a subject. Crucially, it is not enough for the possessor to be the only animate referent or, more generally, the only semantically plausible referent in a clause to control an embedded subject: it must be an *agreeing* possessor, a PIP. In other words, pragmatic and semantic salience does not suffice to allow functional control by the possessor; the morphosyntactic coding of the possessor as a PIP is necessary as well. PIPs as controllers can be represented schematically as in (28) (cf. (22)). Here, the main clause subject is a possessive NP with its PIP acting as the controller of the embedded converbial clause's PRO subject.

(28) [ [CVB PRO<sub>i</sub> ... V-MOD.CVB ] [ PIP<sub>i</sub> possessee<sub>j</sub>-AGR ]<sub>SBJ</sub> ... V ]

Note that the control relation between a PIP and a null subject is only possible when the PIP is in the main clause and the controlled element is in the converbial clause, but not vice versa. This pattern corresponds to the general tendency that relations between embedded referential expressions and argumental anaphors in the main clause are less acceptable in TN. PIPs can in principle occur in embedded clauses, but when they do, they do not corefer with arguments in the main clause. In other words, PIPs do not participate in backward control (Polinsky and Potsdam 2002).

Just like non-subject arguments cannot control coreference with embedded subjects of same-subject converbial clauses, PIPs on grammatical functions other than subjects are unable to control the converbial subject. This is shown in (29), where the only possible controller is the first person singular subject of the main clause, but not *Maša* or *sister*.

(29) [ maya-° ]                      Maša-h              řabako-m-ta              řu°ća°-d°m  
          glad-MOD.CVB Masha-GEN    sister-ACC-3SG              kiss-1SG  
          ‘Being glad, I kissed Masha’s sister.’

To a certain degree, the pattern in (29) also reflects the same-subject preference of the converb involved, and the example shows that the presence of a PIP in the main clause does not by itself allow the possessor to control an embedded subject. Rather, the PIP must be hosted by the main clause's subject to act as a controller of the embedded subject. This behaviour of PIPs with respect to switch-reference suggests that they are in some sense ‘parasitic’ on their possessed head noun. In converbial clauses, only a PIP of the subject can control the embedded subject, PIPs on other grammatical functions cannot. So PIPs behave as if they were subjects, without taking on other subject properties such as triggering agreement on the finite verb, for instance.

It is also worth pointing out that when PIPs control embedded subjects of modal converbs, the possession relations involved are not restricted to part-whole relations, such as body parts, or inalienable possession, such as kinship relations. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this volume, part-whole relations are sometimes exempt from same-subject restrictions in languages with switch-reference, i.e. the part and the whole can act as switch-reference pivots in separate clauses without being strictly coreferential. However, (26a) clearly demonstrates that PIPs in an alienable possessive relation can also act as a switch-reference pivot, which shows that we are dealing with a different phenomenon in TN. An analysis of the examples in (26) in terms of so-called ‘logophoric centers’ is also unlikely. Williams (1992) and Sichel (2010) argue that possessors can sometimes act as controllers when the possessor, rather than the possessed noun, is the logophoric center, i.e. the entity whose mental state is involved in the control relation. The behaviour of PIPs is independent of this notion, however. Consider (26a) again: since the possessed noun is the inanimate *book*, it cannot have a mental state in the first place and so cannot act as the logophoric center for the control relation, only its possessor can. But only the PIP can act as a controller, showing that it is the possessor’s morphosyntactic properties that determine whether the control relation is licit. In addition, the fact that in the absence of the PIP, the embedded subject can be controlled by the possessed noun *book* shows that we are not dealing with non-obligatory control, which is restricted to human referents (Landau 2013: 232).

In sum, we have demonstrated that in converbial constructions which involve a coreference relation between the converbial and the matrix clause, PIPs bypass the otherwise strict same-subject requirement. PIPs of subjects appear to be the only type of NP in the matrix clause that constitutes an exception to this same-subject pattern: they can control embedded null subjects, while non-agreeing lexical possessors and non-subjects arguments cannot. This is an instance of non-canonical switch-reference, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume. We return to the question of how PIPs can act as controllers in Section 6, after discussing their distribution in the clause in the following section.

## **5 Prominent internal possessors as a proximate category**

We concluded in Section 2 that PIPs are associated with a certain level of functional prominence. In this section, we discuss the functional properties of PIPs in more detail and argue that PIPs can be conceptualized in terms of having Proximate status. Evidence for this comes from the interaction of PIPs with other third person nominals in the clause, which we analyse as the effects on an obviation system.

### **5.1 Syntactic distribution of PIPs**

Let us first return to the syntactic distribution of PIPs. We mentioned in Section 2.2 that PIPs are unique in the clause and that they rarely occur on oblique grammatical functions and in dependent clauses (although they are not completely ungrammatical there). There are, however, other strict syntactic restrictions on the distribution of PIPs in the clause, which are more relevant for our analysis.

First, consider the following pairs of examples. (30) indicates that PIPs are compatible with a first person subject, but an analogous structure with a third person subject is ungrammatical.

(30)

a. mən° [ Wera-h ti-m / te-m-ta ] ladə°-d°m  
 I Wera-GEN reindeer-ACC reindeer-ACC-3SG hit-1SG  
 ‘I hit Wera’s reindeer.’

b. Maša [ Wera-h ti-m / \*te-m-ta ] ladə°  
 Masha Wera-GEN reindeer-ACC reindeer-ACC-3SG hit.3SG  
 ‘Masha hit Wera’s reindeer.’

Second, PIPs interact with object agreement in various ways. Object agreement in TN is generally expressed cumulatively with subject agreement, which is obligatory on all finite verbs. Object agreement indexes the number of a third person object, but generally only topical/specific third person lexical objects trigger agreement (for details see Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011: 127ff; Nikolaeva 2014a: 201ff). First and second person objects, as well as pronominal third person objects never control agreement. When a PIP appears as the possessor of an agreeing object, sentences are generally judged grammatical, whereas if a PIP appears on the subject, object agreement is ungrammatical. This is illustrated in the following set of examples. Note that because of the contrast in (30), grammatical examples with a PIP of the object necessarily involve a non-third person subject. (31) illustrates that a PIP of the object is compatible with object agreement, if the object is topical (see Nikolaeva 2014a: 145 for further examples).

(31) Maša-h ŋæ-m-ta məl°ə-w° / məl°ə-d°m  
 Masha-GEN leg-ACC-3SG break-1SG>SG.OBJ break-1SG  
 ‘I broke Masha’s leg.’

The examples in (32) show the interaction of PIPs of the subject with object agreement. (32a) includes a PIP of the subject and agreement with a (null) pronominal object, and is ungrammatical, on any possible reading. (32b) is a minimal pair that differs only in that the possessor of the subject is a regular non-agreeing possessor, indicating that ungrammaticality is due to the presence of a PIP and object agreement. While the sentence is grammatical, it is important to note that neither the PIP nor the subject can corefer with the object; its reference must be free. (33) is a similar example with a PIP of the subject and a lexical object that is grammatical without object agreement.

(32)

a. \*Wera-h né°ka-da lad°ə-da

Wera-GEN brother-3SG hit-3SG>SG.OBJ  
intended: ‘Wera<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> hit him/her<sub>i/j/k</sub>.’

b. Wera-h né°ka lad°ə-da  
Wera-GEN brother hit-3SG>SG.OBJ  
‘Wera<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> hit him/her<sub>i/\*j/k</sub>.’

(33) Maša-h wæ̀sako-da pida xər°-m-ta xana° /  
Masha-GEN husband-3SG 3SG knife-ACC-3SG take.3SG  
\*xanaə-da  
take-3SG>SG.OBJ  
‘Masha<sub>i</sub>’s husband<sub>j</sub> took his/her<sub>i/\*j/k</sub> knife.’

Third, possessed objects are in principle compatible with free-standing third person pronominal obliques, like the dative argument *há°nta* ‘to him/her’ in (34a) and (34b). However, when a free-standing third person pronominal is present in a clause in an argument or adjunct role, PIPs are ungrammatical, as shown in (34b). Removing the pronoun allows the PIP to be present, as (34c) shows. Embedded pronominals, e.g. possessive pronominals, do not block PIPs.

(34)

a. (pida) né°ka-m-ta há°nta ŋæ̀daraə-d°m  
3SG brother-ACC-3SG 3SG.DAT send-1SG  
‘I sent his/her brother to him/her.’

b. [ Pet´a-h né°ka-m / \*né°ka-m-ta ] há°nta ŋæ̀daraə-d°m  
Petya-GEN brother-ACC brother-ACC-3SG 3SG.DAT send-1SG  
‘I sent Peter’s brother to him/her.’

c. [ Pet´a-h né°ka-m / né°ka-m-ta ] ŋæ̀daraə-d°m  
Petya-GEN brother-ACC brother-ACC-3SG send-1SG  
‘I sent Peter’s brother (somewhere).’

To summarize these patterns, the distribution of PIPs is syntactically restricted in terms of their co-occurrence with other nominals that have one property in common: they are all third person. The three main conditions can be stated as follows. PIPs are incompatible with

- i. third person subjects;
- ii. objects that control agreement;
- iii. clause-level third person pronominals.

For conditions (i) and (ii), it must be stressed that both third person subjects and objects controlling agreement can host PIPs, but PIPs of other grammatical functions are incompatible with third person subjects and objects controlling agreement. Since PIPs are lexical, they are third person by definition. The fact that the occurrence of PIPs is restricted by (a subset of) other *third* person nominals only, but not by first or second person nominals, suggests an account in terms of obviation.

## 5.2 Obviation

Obviation is a grammatical system of reference tracking which is sensitive to certain properties of third person nominals and regulates their co-occurrence in a given syntactic domain, usually a minimal clause (Dahlstrom 1986a,b; Rhodes 1990; Russell 1991; Dryer 1992b; Aissen 1997, 2001; Brittain 2001; Oshima 2007; Zúñiga 2014; Rhodes 2017, among others). Obviation systems distinguish two main types of third person nominals: Proximate vs. Obviative. Proximate nominals are more restricted in the sense that in the relevant syntactic domain, the ‘obviation span’, there can only be a single Proximate referent: if two phrases are both Proximate, they have to corefer. Any non-Proximate third person is Obviative. Aissen (1997, 2001) refers to this restriction as **Proximate Uniqueness** (see also Dahlstrom 1986a: 108, 1986b: 51; Russell: 1991: 322; Brittain 2001: 69).

Whether a third person NP is Proximate or Obviative correlates with the NP’s animacy, topicality, and semantic role, as well as its role in a possessive relation, among other characteristics. The relevance of these parameters differs from language to language to some extent, but in addition to Proximate Uniqueness, which has been claimed to be a universal constraint on obviation, languages with obviation systems are similar in their default mappings of Proximate status onto certain grammatical functions and referential properties. In general, the following patterns hold if there are two third person nominals in an obviation span (see e.g. I. Goddard 1990; Aissen 1997, 2001):

- animates are Proximate, inanimates are Obviative
- subjects are Proximate, objects are Obviative
- possessors are Proximate, possessed nouns are Obviative

Aissen (1997, 2001) conceptualises these preferences as constraints in an Optimality Theoretic framework which interact with the constraint ensuring the syntactic prominence of Proximate over Obviative, and other language-specific phenomena. Here, we provide a representative example of how Aissen’s system works. The data in (35) illustrate an aspect of Plains Cree morphosyntax, namely *direct* (DIR) and *inverse* (INV) verb forms. Both examples involve two third person participants, but the direct verb form indicates that the subject is Proximate, and the object is Obviative, while the inverse form shows the opposite.

(35) Cree direct and inverse verb forms

- a. wa:pam-e:-w  
 see-DIR-3  
 ‘he (Prox) sees him (Obv)’ (Dahlstrom 1986a: 52)
- b. wa:pam-ekw-w  
 see-INV-3  
 ‘he (Obv) sees him (Prox)’ (Dahlstrom 1986a: 53)

The use of these categories can be characterized by the interaction of two (simplified) hierarchies, the participant hierarchy in (36) and the hierarchy of grammatical functions in (37).

(36) Participant Hierarchy  
 Proximate > Obviative

(37) Hierarchy of grammatical functions  
 Subject > Object

Aissen (1997) proposes two constraints that capture the relation between the two hierarchies. The first constraint, Direct Align, pairs each level on the hierarchies in (36) and (37) with the corresponding level on the other, creating a paired hierarchy (Subject, Proximate) > (Object, Obviative). The second constraint, Inverse Align, changes the ranking on one of the hierarchies before combining them to give (Subject, Obviative) > (Object, Proximate).

These two constraints determine whether, in a given scenario, the direct form, shown in (35a), or in the inverse form, shown in (35b), is chosen to spell-out the structure involving two third person arguments. If, in the given context, the subject is Proximate and the object is Obviative, then Direct Align is satisfied, but Inverse Align is violated, making the direct verb form grammatical. Conversely, if the subject is Obviative and the object is Proximate, Direct Align is violated, and only the inverse form is grammatical. In addition, Aissen (1997) introduces constraints other than (37) to reflect the relative prominence of animate over inanimate nominals and possessors over possessed nouns, which are paired with the participant hierarchy in analogous ways. Cross-linguistic variation arises through different constraint rankings across languages.

Another property of obviation languages is the difference between *morphological* and *syntactic* obviation (Aissen 1997, 2001). Morphological obviation refers to the overt coding of Proximate or Obviative morphology, on nominals and/or in verb morphology, while syntactic obviation refers to the processes that are affected by these categories. Aissen (1997) argues at length that obviation systems can be identified *without* a morphological reflex of obviation, for example in Tzotzil (Mayan) and Chamorro (Western Austronesian). Both languages exhibit similarities to obviation systems in languages better studied in this respect, like Algonquian.

In Tzotzil, the following hierarchy of possessors (‘genitives’ in Aissen’s terms) and possessed nouns is active, in addition to the hierarchy of grammatical functions:

- (38) Nominal relational hierarchy  
 possessor > possessed noun (cf. Aissen 1997: 712, (18))

The hierarchy in (38) must be aligned directly with the participant hierarchy, meaning that possessors must be Proximate and possessed nouns Obviative. In combination with direct alignment of the hierarchies of the participant and the grammatical functions hierarchies, this system explains the ungrammaticality of examples like (39).

- (39) \*Ta s-sa’ *pro*<sub>i</sub> y-ajnil li Manvel-e<sub>i</sub>  
 ICOMPL A3-seek A3-wife the Manuel-ENC  
 intended: ‘Manuel<sub>i</sub>’s wife is looking for him<sub>i</sub>.’ (Aissen 1997: 720)

(39) exhibits Tzotzil’s VSO order. The object is a null *pro*, coindexed with the subject’s possessor, *Manvel-e*. Crucially, Aissen (1997) provides arguments against a possible analysis in terms of binding theory, suggesting that only obviation rules out structures like (39). She proposes that this example is ungrammatical because it cannot satisfy both direct alignment constraints. If *Manvel-e* and *pro* are both Proximate, the possessed noun *y-ajnil* ‘his wife’ must be Obviative: this violates the constraint requiring a subject to be Proximate. If *Manvel-e* and *pro* are both Obviative, and the subject is Proximate, this violates the constraint requiring a possessor to be Proximate.

In the next subsection, we will demonstrate that similar restrictions apply in TN.

### 5.3 Obviation in Tundra Nenets

We propose that in TN morphological obviation is reflected in the coding of PIPs by means of third person possessive morphology. PIPs are therefore lexically specified as Proximate, but their Proximate status is not flagged on the PIP itself; instead it is signalled by possessive agreement morphology on the possessed noun. Regular lexical possessors are underspecified for obviation. Possessors differ from subjects, agreeing objects and third person pronouns in that they are the only category coding morphological obviation; all these categories behave alike with respect to syntactic obviation, however. Syntactic obviation regulates the distribution of PIPs and other third person nominals in a certain syntactic domain, the obviation span, which corresponds to the minimal clause. Thus, according to Aissen’s criteria, TN appears to have both morphological and syntactic obviation.

As in other languages with obviation, the main restriction that holds in TN is Proximate Uniqueness, i.e. a restriction to a single Proximate category per clause. Proximate Uniqueness predicts correctly that there can only be a single PIP per clause, even though there can be several non-agreeing third person possessors. It can also derive the co-occurrence restrictions of PIPs with other third person nominals in the clause which we described in Section 5.1. The



basic insight is that PIPs, as an inherently Proximate category, compete with other Proximate categories: the co-occurrence restrictions follow from violations of Proximate Uniqueness.

Since PIPs are the only category that is overtly coded as Proximate in TN, the Proximate status of other categories is determined differently. Nominals other than PIPs are not inherently specified as either Proximate or Obviative, but are assigned Proximate status based on their rank on the animacy hierarchy and the grammatical functions (or relational) hierarchy. Both of these hierarchies are usually thought of as universal (Silverstein 1976; Keenan and Comrie 1977; Bresnan 1982b; Perlmutter 1983; Perlmutter and Rosen 1984; Bresnan *et al.* 2016), even though details vary across languages, and both are independently motivated in TN. The TN versions of these are shown in (40) and (41).

**(40) Animacy hierarchy**

animate > inanimate

**(41) Grammatical functions hierarchy (for TN, first version)**

subject > object controlling agreement > object > oblique

Animacy is a grammaticalised property of personal pronouns in the nominative, accusative or dative, which always have animate (or more accurately human) referents.<sup>6</sup> As such, the animacy hierarchy is only relevant for personal pronouns. For lexical nouns, animacy is not a grammatical feature and therefore their behaviour is only determined by the hierarchy in (41). This hierarchy reflects both formal and information structural properties of grammatical functions. For example, subjects and agreeing objects are default topics in TN (Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011: 127ff; Nikolaeva 2014a: 207ff), and both trigger agreement with the verb. Non-agreeing objects and obliques are not normally topical, and can never agree, but there is a number of syntactic tests that differentiate the former from the latter (see Nikolaeva 2014a: 202ff).

As in other languages, then, we propose that Proximate status is assigned to an NP that is highest on (40) and (41) within the given obviation span.

**(42) Proximate assignment in Tundra Nenets**

In a given clause, assign Proximate status to the NP that is highest on (40) and (41).

The animacy hierarchy takes precedence over the grammatical functions hierarchy in that free-standing personal pronouns outrank lexical NPs of any grammatical function, as discussed below.

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6 This restriction does not seem to hold for pronouns derived from local cases, which also differ in their structure, being postpositional phrases with pronominal complements. Here, we are focussing on personal pronouns in non-local cases, the nominative, accusative and dative. Genitive free-standing pronouns only occur as objects of some postpositions and are also excluded from consideration.



We will first illustrate the workings of (42) with respect to grammatical functions, independently of third person pronouns. In a simple transitive clause without PIPs, (42) works as follows.

- (43) Maša (Wera-h) ti-m ladə° / ladə°-da  
 Masha Wera-GEN reindeer-ACC hit.3SG hit.3SG>SG.OBJ  
 ‘Masha hit Wera’s / a / the reindeer.’

In (43), both the subject and the object (agreeing or not) are third person. According to (42), then, the subject will be Proximate, and the object will be Obviative, as shown in (44), following Aissen’s (1997) notation.

- (44) [ **Proximate**      Obviative ]  
       |                    |  
       **SBJ**              **OBJ(+AGR)**

As in other languages, obviation can lead to passivisation if the object’s referent is Proximate (i.e. more topical than the subject’s), though it is at present not clear how strong this restriction is in TN.<sup>7</sup>

Now, recall that PIPs are incompatible with a third person subject and an agreeing third person object, but not other lexical third person nominals. These patterns indicate that PIPs behave as if they had a position on the grammatical functions hierarchy as follows:

**(45) Grammatical functions hierarchy (revised)**

subject > object controlling agreement > **PIP** > object > oblique

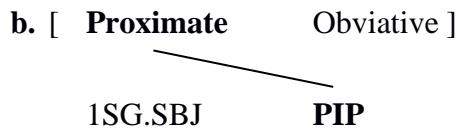
This ensures that PIPs can only appear when there is no higher element on (45) present in the clause. If subjects and agreeing objects are preferentially assigned Proximate status, as suggested above, this restriction follows from Proximate Uniqueness.

The grammatical and ungrammatical structures can be illustrated as follows. In (46) (repeated from above), the subject is first person, and therefore irrelevant to obviation. The PIP is thus straightforwardly Proximate.

**(46) First person subject and PIP of object**

- a. mən° [ Wera-h ti-m / te-m-ta ] lad°ə-d°m  
 I Wera-GEN reindeer-ACC reindeer-ACC-3SG hit-1SG  
 ‘I hit Wera’s reindeer.’

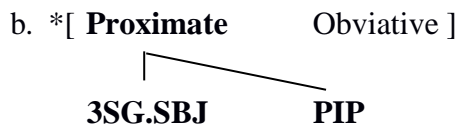
<sup>7</sup> Object agreement is another strategy of topicalizing a theme-like argument, and we suspect that this (in part) explains why passivisation seems to apply less regularly in TN than in a number of other languages with both obviation and passives.



In (47), on the other hand, the subject is third person, and is therefore Proximate following (42). However, since PIPs are inherently Proximate, there are two Proximate NPs in the obviation span. This leads to a violation of Proximate Uniqueness, and thus ungrammaticality.

(47) \*Third person subject and PIP of object

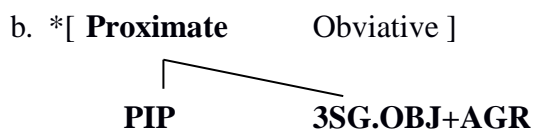
- a. \*Maša        [ Wera-h            te-m-ta ]            ladə°  
 Masha            Wera-GEN    reindeer-ACC-3SG   hit.3SG  
 ‘Masha hit Wera’s reindeer.’



We have also seen that a PIP of the subject leads to ungrammaticality if the verb agrees with the object as well as the subject, whereas an analogous structure with a regular non-agreeing possessor is grammatical. The reason for this contrast is that the agreeing object is assigned Proximate status as per (42); if there is a PIP in the clause as well, Proximate Uniqueness is violated. This is illustrated in (48). If there were no PIP in (48), only the subject would be assigned Proximate status as the highest grammatical function, and Proximate Uniqueness would hold.

(48) \*PIP of subject and agreeing object

- a. \*Wera-h            né°ka-da            lad°ə-da  
 Wera-GEN    brother-3SG    hit-3SG>SG.OBJ  
 intended: ‘Wera<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> hit him/her<sub>i/j/k</sub>.’



The examples above showed that both third person subjects and agreeing objects are compatible with PIPs if the subject or object, respectively, hosts the PIP itself. This means that third person subjects and agreeing objects are only Proximate if they do not host a PIP. If they

do host a PIP, the PIP is Proximate, and the possessed noun is Obviative, in analogy to other languages with obviation systems.

The pattern in (49), repeated from (34), shows the effect of animacy on obviation. Free-standing third person pronominals need not outrank the host of the PIP (or in fact any other lexical nominal) in terms of grammatical functions. In (49b), for example, the PIP is the possessor of the direct object, which outranks the dative pronominal in terms of grammatical functions. Nevertheless, it is the pronoun *ńa<sup>o</sup>nta* that makes the presence of the PIP ungrammatical. This indicates that the grammaticalized animacy of personal pronouns, i.e. the hierarchy in (40) takes precedence over the grammatical functions hierarchy when it comes to the distribution of PIPs.

(49)

- a. (pida)    *ńe<sup>o</sup>ka-m-ta*                      *ńa<sup>o</sup>nta*            *ŋǣdaraə-d<sup>o</sup>m*  
               3SG    brother-ACC-3SG    3SG.DAT    send-1SG  
               ‘I sent his/her<sub>i</sub> brother<sub>j</sub> to him/her<sub>k</sub>.’

- b. [    Pet’a-h            *ńe<sup>o</sup>ka-m* /        \**ńe<sup>o</sup>ka-m-ta* ]    *ńa<sup>o</sup>nta*            *ŋǣdaraə-d<sup>o</sup>m*  
               Petya-GEN    brother-ACC    brother-ACC-3SG    3SG.DAT    send-1SG  
               ‘I sent Peter<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> to him/her<sub>k</sub>.’

- c. [    Pet’a-h            *ńe<sup>o</sup>ka-m* /        *ńe<sup>o</sup>ka-m-ta* ]                      *ŋǣdaraə-d<sup>o</sup>m*  
               Petya-GEN    brother-ACC    brother-ACC-3SG    send-1SG  
               ‘I sent Peter’s brother (somewhere).’

While the pronominal *ńa<sup>o</sup>nta* is neither a subject, nor an agreeing object, it cannot co-occur with PIPs. This follows if pronominals are assigned Proximate status by virtue of their grammaticalized animacy, and thus the presence of both a third person pronoun and a PIP leads to a violation of Proximate Uniqueness. Consider how this follows from (42): the (dropped) subject in each sentence in (49) is first person, and the object does not agree with the verb. Therefore, according to the grammatical functions hierarchy in (45), there is nothing blocking PIPs. However, the pronoun *ńa<sup>o</sup>nta*, even though not a subject or an agreeing object, is Proximate and is incompatible with another Proximate NP, the PIP. This is illustrated in (50).

- (50) \*[ **Proximate**                      Obviative ]  
               1SG.SBJ                      **PIP**                      3SG.DAT

The ungrammatical versions of (47)–(49) can each be repaired by replacing the PIP with a non-agreeing lexical possessor, for which there is no requirement to be Proximate.

An alternative to assuming that personal pronouns are assigned Proximate status due to the effects of an animacy hierarchy is to assume that they are inherently Proximate. On this analysis, third person pronouns would be lexically specified as Proximate because of their pronominal category and grammaticalized animacy, rather than being assigned Proximate status relative to other third person nominals based on (42). At the moment, we do not have conclusive evidence for or against this view, since it remains unclear how personal pronouns interact with other positions on the hierarchy of grammatical functions in terms of obviation. However, the analysis of PIPs we presented in this chapter is fully compatible with both perspectives.

In sum, we propose that obviation can explain the distribution of PIPs in the TN clause under the assumption that PIPs are inherently specified as Proximate and that other lexical third person nominals obey the hierarchy in (45), while third person pronouns outrank PIPs as Proximates due to their grammaticalized animacy. Like in other languages with obviation, the main restriction in Tundra Nenets is Proximate Uniqueness; it disallows more than one non-coreferential Proximate referent per clause, representing an aspect of syntactic obviation.

Finally, it is important to note that while obviation, like binding, imposes restrictions on the co-occurrence of third person nominals in a clause, binding principles cannot account for the distribution of PIPs in TN. This is clear from the examples discussed in this section because PIPs are ruled out by other third person NPs even when these do not have the same referent as the PIP. Since binding principles only come into play when expressions corefer, the restrictions on the distribution of PIPs cannot be due to binding theory.

## 5.4 Obviation status and topicality

In this section, we further investigate the functional role of PIPs and, in particular, the question whether and how the Proximate status correlates with topicality. We understand a topic (‘aboutness topic’) to be the referent that the rest of the proposition is about (see e.g. Reinhart 1981; Gundel 1988; Lambrecht 1994: 117ff). In a similar vein, we also adopt the notion of *secondary* topic (Nikolaeva 2001; Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011) understood to be a less salient referent that stands in a certain relation with the primary topic such that the proposition is about that relation. Finally, discourse topics are referents that act as aboutness topics for larger stretches of discourse than a sentence (Reinhart 1981: 54; see also Lambrecht 1994: 117; Watson Todd 2016: 7ff for similar definitions, and Zúñiga 2006 for discussion). Like with secondary topics, a proposition can arguably be about the relation between a primary sentence topic and a discourse topic. Here, we consider whether PIPs act as either of these three different types of topics.

Dahlstrom (2017) discusses the relationship between obviation and information structure in the Algonquian language Meskwaki (also known as Fox). Meskwaki morphologically codes both Proximate and Obviative categories and has a designated topic position. The language provides clear evidence for mismatches, as illustrated in (51). The proper name *Wi:sahke:ha* is in the initial topic position in (51a), and its referent is both a sentence topic and Proximate, but in (51b) the sentence topic is a possessed noun, which is obligatorily Obviative in Meskwaki.

(51)

a. wi:sahke:h-a=ke:hi      wa:natohka=meko      e:h-kehči-nepa:či  
 W.-SG=and                      peacefully=EMPH      AOR-greatly-sleep-3.PROX.AOR  
 ‘As for Wi:sahke:ha (Prox), he was peacefully sound asleep.’

b. i:n-ini=ke:hi      o-o:šisem-ani                      wa:natohka=meko  
 that-OBV=and      her-grandchild-OBV      peacefully=EMPH  
 e:h-kehči-nepa:-niči  
 AOR-greatly-sleep-3.OBV.AOR  
 ‘As for her grandson (Obv), he was peacefully sound asleep.’

(Kiyana 1913 *via* Dahlstrom 2017: 48)

Thus, topics and foci can be both Proximate and Obviative, i.e. there is no direct mapping between obviation and information structure roles (Dahlstrom 2017: 52).

Showing that Proximates are not always topics is not as straightforward in TN because the language lacks the extensive morphological coding of obviation that Meskwaki exhibits. However, the examples we discuss below, from a text originally published in Labanauskas (1995: 112-123) and reprinted in Nikolaeva (2014a: 460-495), show that the choice between PIPs and regular possessors cannot be simply predicted by the grammatical, information structural and discourse function of their host. The conclusion reached by Dahlstrom (2017) that obviation status reflects factors such as empathy, agency and point of view, rather than topicality alone thus might also hold of TN.

The following examples involve different kinds of possessors on subjects. The text is about a woman called *Tab Ed Xewko* (the only named character). Other characters include her dog and later her husband and son. One type of context in which PIPs appear on the subject several times is a stretch of discourse involving null subjects referring to *Tab Ed Xewko*, followed by a sentence with a different subject, a PIP of the subject, and *Tab Ed Xewko* as the subject again. This is indicated in (52), where each instance of *she* is a null subject in the original.<sup>8</sup>

(52) Context: *She immediately processed the man’s catch. She dried and processed them. In the summer she dried wild reindeer skins in the fresh summer air. Then she dried and processed them again. She processed and stored them.*

a. *After a while spring came.*

8 Note that *Tab Ed Xewko* is itself a possessed noun in (52), (53), and (54). The possessor is a second person singular; this kind of possessive marking has an anchoring function of some sort and does not indicate an actual possession or ownership relation like that between *Tab Ed Xewko* and her dog.

b. Təb° Yed° Xæw°ko-nt° weŋako-ća-da p̃ix°na ŋaŋih t'ofe-won-ta.  
 T. Y. X.-GEN.2SG dog-DIM-3SG outside more bark-AUD-3SG  
 'Tab Ed Xewko's little dog could be heard barking outside again.'

c. Təb° Yed° Xæw°ko-r° t'edah t'eñew°-q ñĩ=w°q.  
 T. Y. X.-2SG now know-CONNNEG NEG.3SG=CL  
 'Now Tab Ed Xewko knew, didn't she?' (Nikolaeva 2014a: 470)

Sentence (52b) is clearly about the character's dog and the respective referent can be analysed as a sentence topic, but the character is the subject in the discourse preceding and following (52b). The same type of context is found in (53), where again a neutral sentence interrupts a string of sentences with the hero's referent expressed as the subject before it is expressed as a PIP and then the subject in the following sentence.

(53) Context: *She grabbed the dog by the flock on its ears and looked between its ears. Oh, there were many tents, about a hundred. There were almost ten thousand reindeer.*

a. Təb° Yed° Xæw°ko-nt° xasawa-da xoni.  
 T. Y. X.-GEN.2SG man-3SG sleep.3SG  
 'Tab Ed Xewko's husband was sleeping.'

b. Təb° Yed° Xæw°ko-r° weŋako-ća-m-ta wadər-ć° ...  
 T. Y. X.-2SG dog-DIM-ACC-3SG take.along-MOD.CVB  
 'Tab Ed Xewko took the dog and ...' (Nikolaeva 2014a: 471)

However, PIPs do not only appear in contexts where their referent is identical to the subject referent of the preceding discourse. In (54), the context consists of a few sentences in which the main character's husband is the subject. Nevertheless, the PIP in (54) refers to the main character, showing that PIPs cannot only pick up referents coded as subjects in the surrounding discourse.

(54) Context: *The man thought: "My pasture will have turned into mud." When he left in the morning, he would be out almost until midday; if it was after midday, he would travel after midday.*

Təb° Yed° Xæw°ko-nt° xasawa-da ma: "Tə-ŋi°  
 T. Y. X.-GEN.2SG man-3SG say.3SG summer-  
 ADJ yil'ebćayet° xoba-xət° s'id'a  
 wild.reindeer.PL.GEN.2SG skin-PL.ABL two  
 m'uy°ko-də-r° sæd°-q.

lower.tent.cover-PRED-2SG      sew-IMP.2SG

‘Tab Ed Xewko’s husband said: “Make two lower tent covers from the skins of the wild  
reindeer killed in the summer ...”’ (Nikolaeva 2014a: 479)

Later in the text, after Tab Ed Xewko has passed away, her referent appears as a regular possessor of *xasawa nū* ‘son’, referring to her son. The distribution of PIPs in these examples seems to suggest that PIPs are used in narratives when their referent is an important participant in a stretch of discourse, i.e. a discourse topic. This fits in well with Watson Todd’s characterisation of discourse topics as entities which are relevant to the coherence in discourse (Watson Todd 2016: 10f).

To conclude, we believe that these data provide an argument for the claim that there is no direct mapping between prominent obviation status (Proximate) and prominent information structural status (sentence topic) in TN. While we have argued above that PIPs cannot be said to be topical in general, the subject function in TN is typically associated with a topic role. If our analysis of PIPs in terms of a Proximate category is correct, it implies that possessed nouns hosting PIPs are Obviative. This, in turn, implies that topics in TN need not be Proximate. The role of PIPs in narrative discourse, at least, is arguably rather that of a discourse topic, e.g. a referent that is relevant throughout a longer stretch of discourse, as is also confirmed by examples such as (6b) above, in which the PIP appears to be part of the focus domain.

## 6 The position of PIPs in the noun phrase

We have seen above that while PIPs do not assume an argument role and remain internal to the possessive NP, they exhibit various prominence effects outside of their phrase. First, they play a special role in the switch-reference system by behaving essentially like their host. Second, they participate in the hierarchy of grammatical functions that controls obviation like clause-level argument functions. This situation is unexpected under standard assumptions about the syntax of phrase-internal constituents (see Chapter 1 for discussion). In this section, we propose that the behaviour of PIPs is due to their peripheral position in the NP which precedes all other phrase-internal material and is the structurally most prominent. This position arguably makes them accessible to certain syntactic processes outside of their phrase.

Following Nikolaeva (2003, 2014a), (at least) two possessor positions are available in TN possessive NPs, a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower’ one. The primary evidence for these positions comes from the relative position of possessors and demonstratives which arguably correspond to determiners. This point is illustrated in (55), where lexical possessors are combined with demonstratives modifying the head noun.

(55)

- a. t’uku°    Wera-h            ti       /       \*te-da  
          this    Wera-GEN    reindeer    reindeer-3SG  
          ‘this reindeer of Wera’s’



- b. Wera-h            t'uku<sup>o</sup>    te-da    /            \*ti  
       Wera-GEN    this        reindeer-3SG    reindeer  
       ‘this reindeer of Wera’s’

These examples show that the possessor either precedes or follows the determiner. The two positions of the possessor correlate with the possibility of agreement: possessors which follow the demonstrative cannot control third person agreement on the head noun, while possessors which precede the demonstrative must trigger agreement, i.e. they are PIPs. It is exactly this kind of peripheral possessor that is able to act as a switch-reference pivot in same-subject converbial clauses, as shown in (56).

- (56) Pet'a-h            t'uku°    ŋǣ-da            yeś°ma  
 Petya-GEN    this            leg-3SG            start.hurting.3SG  
          [ tol°-h            t'ax°na            ŋamt'o-°    ]  
          table-GEN at            sit-MOD.CVB  
 'This leg of Petya<sub>i</sub>'s started hurting when he<sub>i</sub> was sitting at the table.'

Multiple positions of possessors associated with different morphosyntactic marking are also attested in other languages, e.g. in Hungarian. Here, lexical possessors in a lower position are nominative and appear in complementary distribution with the definite determiner; possessors in a higher position are dative and precede the definite determiner (see Szabolcsi 1983, 1994; É. Kiss 2002; Dékány 2011, 2015). The distributional facts of possessors and demonstratives suggest that the NP in TN has a similar structure, as shown in (57), where PIPs are in a higher position than demonstratives. Possessors in this position must trigger agreement on the possessed noun, while lower possessors must not.<sup>9</sup>

- (57) Noun phrase structure in Tundra Nenets (informally, to berevised)  
[ PIP [ Dem [ lexical possessor [ possessed noun ]]]]

A clear difference in the syntactic behaviour of PIPs and regular lexical possessors of subjects lies in whether they can corefer with possessive pronominals on objects. Such coreference is impossible with regular lexical possessors, as shown in (58).

- (58) Wera-h           ńe°ka           weńako-m-ta           ŋəwla°  
Wera-GEN   brother           dog-ACC-3SG           fed.3SG  
‘Wera<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> fed his/her\*<sub>i/j</sub>/k dog.’ (Nikolaeva 2014a: 283)

9 Georgi (2014: 203ff) proposes that this pattern follows from the timing of possessor movement and agreement in the TN NP. She argues that all possessors originate in the same low position where they are assigned genitive. Low possessors move before agreeing with the possessed noun, while high possessors move after agreeing with the possessed noun.



Agreeing possessors, on the other hand, can corefer with possessive pronominals. (59) only differs from (58) in that it features an agreeing possessor in a higher position in the noun phrase.

- (59) Wera-h           ńe°ka-da           weńako-m-ta           ŋəwla°  
Wera-GEN   brother-3SG   dog-ACC-3SG       fed  
‘Wera<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> fed his/her<sub>i/j/k</sub> dog.’ (Nikolaeva 2014a: 392)

This example is parallel to (33), the only difference being that in (33) the presence of a free-standing possessive pronominal in the object phrase precludes a reflexive interpretation.

A possible analysis of this pattern is that the higher possessor is in the specifier of the maximal nominal projection, arguably DP, and that it is able to c-command out of the DP to bind a possessive pronominal in the object. C-command out of a specifier position is possible under certain assumptions, e.g. if specifiers are analysed as adjuncts, as suggested by Kayne (1994: 15ff), building on earlier work by May (1985: 56ff) and Chomsky (1986: 7ff). As adjuncts, specifiers are not fully contained within the DP and therefore can c-command out of it (as in (59)). A structure compatible with these assumptions is shown in (60).

- (60) Noun phrase structure in Tundra Nenets  
[<sub>DP</sub> PIP [<sub>DP</sub> D [<sub>NP</sub> lexical possessor [<sub>NP</sub> possessed noun ]]]]

Accidental coreference between a lower, regular possessor of the subject and a possessive pronominal in the object can be ruled out by competition between (58) and (59) and the use of one structure blocking the use of the other. In principle, both the regular possessor in (58) and the PIP in (59) could corefer with the possessive pronominal in the object phrase, but only the PIP can bind it because it can c-command out of the DP. The more specific, bound interpretation is associated with the structure in (59) which then blocks accidental coreference in (58). This reasoning is essentially pragmatic: if the structure involving a PIP can give rise to a bound reading, not using it can be associated with the implicature that a bound reading was not intended (see e.g. Reinhart 1983: 75ff for a similar pragmatic argument; Grodzinsky and Reinhart 1993; Safir 2004; Safir 2014; Truswell 2014 also discuss competition in binding and coreference, but mostly in terms of alternative forms of the bindee). Word order and coreference relations thus provide evidence for a peripheral position of PIPs in the NP.

In Section 5, we showed that PIPs behave like clause-level phrases in some respects, because they can only appear in the absence of certain other third person NPs in the clause, and that they can be analysed as inherently Proximate. We therefore propose that the higher position for possessors in SpecDP, but not the lower one, is associated with Proximate status in TN. In this adjunct position, which is only optionally projected, the PIP controls third person possessive agreement on the possessed noun. With PIPs, possessive morphology thus does not represent pronominal incorporation as we hypothesized above for the examples in (1), but grammatical agreement. In other words, the third person possessive affixes are

ambiguous between pronominal and agreement interpretations (as proposed for another Uralic language, Finnish, by Toivonen 2000).

The fact that PIPs, but not lower possessors, can act as controllers of embedded subjects in converbial constructions (as discussed in Sections 3 and 4) is arguably also a consequence of their position. The higher position allows PIPs to show aspects of clause-level behaviour, in particular competing with other third person NPs in the clause for Proximate status, and to be ‘parasitic’ on the subject’s properties, as we argued in Section 4. These facts motivated placing PIPs on the grammatical functions hierarchy in (45), indicating that they behave in some relevant respect as if they were a clause-level grammatical function.

The fact that PIPs appear to have a position on the grammatical functions hierarchy in (45) falls under Landau’s (2013: 29ff) notion of ‘codependency’, which is part of his definition of obligatory control. Landau defines the dependents of a clause as the arguments and adjuncts in that clause. A subject and an adjunct in a clause *S* are thus codependents of each other (or ‘clausemates’), since they are both dependents of that clause, even though adjuncts are not assigned an argument role by the predicate of that clause. Landau (2013: 30) suggests that codependency captures the effects of three syntactic properties of obligatory control relations: since controllers in obligatory control must be codependents of the clause hosting PRO, codependency rules out long-distance control (i.e. control crossing more than one clause boundary), arbitrary control (i.e. free reference of PRO in the absence of a controller), as well as control by a controller that does not c-command PRO (e.g. possessors of the subject in a language like English).

Landau (2013: 29) then defines obligatory control such that, first, a PRO subject must be interpreted as bound by the controller, and second, that the controller of PRO must be a codependent of the clause hosting PRO (see also Potsdam and Haddad 2017: 2ff for discussion of Landau’s criteria and Williams 1980: 209 for an earlier definition of obligatory control).

In terms of the hierarchy in (45), the dependents of a clause *S* form the set of NPs bearing grammatical functions in that clause. Our analysis of PIPs thus fits in well Landau’s (2013) definitional criteria of obligatory control: the data discussed in Sections 3, 4, and 5 show that PIPs are controllers, because they behave like clause-level grammatical functions and c-command out of the DP that hosts them. PIPs thus qualify as codependents of the adjunct clause that hosts the PRO subject. This is illustrated schematically for TN converbial clauses in (61).

(61)

- a. [ [CVB PRO<sub>*i*</sub> ... ] SBJ<sub>*i*</sub> ... ]
- b. [ [CVB PRO<sub>*i*</sub> ... ] [DP PIP<sub>*i*</sub> [DP ... ]]SBJ ... ]
- c. [ [CVB PRO\*<sub>*i*</sub> ... ] [NP Possessor<sub>*i*</sub> [N’ ... ]]SBJ ... ] ... ]

In (61a), the subject SBJ and the converbial clause are an argument and an adjunct of the main clause, respectively, and are therefore codependents. The same can be said to hold in (61b), in which the main clause subject has a PIP. We have seen that PIPs can only appear in the absence of certain third person arguments in the clause: this distributional restriction is an argument for codependence of the PIP and the converbial clause, because if the PIP is a codependent of arguments in the clause, and arguments and adjuncts are codependents as well, then the PIP and the adjunct must be codependents as well (in other words, codependence is a transitive relation). Since both the subject and the PIP in (61a) and (61b), respectively, are codependents of the converbial clause hosting PRO, they can act as controllers. This is not possible in (61c), however. The regular possessor is not a codependent of the converbial clause, presumably because it is embedded too deeply in the subject DP and there is no evidence that it participates in any clause-level processes. It is therefore not a possible controller of PRO.

In sum, what makes PIPs in TN special with respect to control is that they behave like codependents of the converbial clause (and arguments in the clause), even though they remain internal to the possessive DP. This property follows from their phrase-peripheral adjunct-like position that makes them accessible to the phrase-external syntax.

## 7 Concluding remarks

This paper makes contributions in three areas. First, it provided the first description of the syntactic properties of PIPs in Tundra Nenets. Like in Bashkir (Chapter 7, this volume), but unlike in many other languages (see Chapter 1 of this volume), PIPs in TN are always third person, since only lexical possessors can be PIPs. They differ from other lexical possessors in that they trigger agreement in person and number of the possessed noun, and they show other distinct morphosyntactic properties which differentiate them from regular lexical possessors, including the ability to act as controllers of PRO in converbial clauses. The distribution of PIPs is restricted by clause-level grammatical functions with which they compete in a number of syntactic processes. We proposed that these properties follow from the structural prominence of PIPs inside the possessive phrase, although there remain open questions about the precise syntactic mechanisms involved.

Second, we argued that the morphosyntactic properties of PIPs reflect their functional prominence in terms of obviation. Obviation has so far not been recognized as a relevant property in any Uralic language, but we proposed that PIPs are an inherently Proximate category and that they are coded as such. The Proximate status of PIPs is not expressed on the Proximate element itself, i.e. the possessor, but signalled by means of agreement morphology on the possessed noun and is evidenced by the patterns of interaction with other third person nominals in the clause. The paper thus supports Aissen's (1997, 2001) view that obviation can be found in languages without obvious morphological markers expressing Proximate and Obviative status (on the respective nominal), as she proposed for Tzotzil and Chamorro. While Tundra Nenets differs from both languages in certain ways, we believe that the distribution of PIPs with respect to other third person NPs is a strong indication that it also has an obviation system.

Third, we showed that, in the in the context of this volume and wider research on PIPs, Tundra Nenets appears to play a rather special role. It is a language in which the distinction between PIPs and regular lexical possessors is very clearly a matter of morphosyntax rather than (just) semantics or pragmatics. It also seems to be unique in grammaticalizing the Proximate status of possessors as PIPs (but see Aissen 1997, 2001 for general discussion of obviation status in possessive constructions).

Bringing these three aspects together raises questions for the study of other languages with PIPs, in particular those in which, like in Tundra Nenets, PIPs are restricted to third person, for example whether obviation is a relevant factor elsewhere too, and about the precise nature of control and coreference relations in converbial constructions. Further research will shed light on these questions and may uncover that other languages resemble Tundra Nenets in these respects.

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